

Prayer after the Meal (the Concluding of the Day)

The Leader lifts a cup of wine and recites the following blessing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctify us through faith in the resurrection of Christ and bless us in this day set apart to celebrate his victory. Blessed are you, Lord our God, who have given us new life in your Son.

Group: Amen.

Pass the common cup of wine and recite the following prayer while the cup is being passed.

Leader: Father in Heaven, grant that we may begin the working days which draw near to us in peace; freed from all sin and transgression, filled with the joy of your Holy Spirit, and following in the ways of your Son Jesus. May we be fully clothed in him, the New Man, created after your likeness in true righteousness and holiness.

Father of Mercy, bless and prosper the work of our hands. Make us fruitful in every good work, unwearied in well-doing, knowing that in Christ our labor is not in vain. May all that we do, in word or deed, be to the praise of your glory through Jesus your Son.

Our God and King, guide and defend the people called by your name. Strengthen and prosper all who cherish thoughts of good towards your people, and fulfill their purposes, but frustrate those who devise evil plans against your people, and make their designs of no effect; as it is said, "Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us" (Isaiah 8:10).

Open to us, Father of Mercies and Lord of Forgiveness, in this week and in the weeks to come, the gates of light and blessing, of redemption and salvation, of heavenly help and rejoicing, of holiness and peace, of the study of your teaching, and of prayer. In us also let the Scripture be fulfilled:

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52:7).

Group: Amen.

The Leader extinguishes the Lord's Day candle.

A song may be sung to conclude.



Ceremonies for the Celebration of the Lord's Day

The Lord's Day Opening Ceremony

"Leader" is the head of the household, most commonly the father of the family. "Assistant" is either the person next in authority or next in age to the Leader, most commonly the mother of the family. "Group" is all the household members and any guests who may be present.

When the letters "G," "A," and "L" appear in parentheses, it indicates that the reading may be done responsively as marked, if more group participation is desired for some special reason, like the desire to adapt the celebration to the presence of small children.

Blessings before the Meal

The Lighting of the Candle

The Assistant usually presides over the Lighting of the Candle. For a shortened form of the ceremony you may omit the passage from John 1:1-5.

Assistant: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

(G:) All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that has been made.

(A:) In him was life and the life was the light of men.

(G:) The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1-5).

Assistant: Heavenly Father, in honor of your Son, Light of the World and Author of Life, we are about to kindle the light for the Lord's Day. On this day you raised your Son Jesus from the dead and began the new creation. May our celebration of his resurrection this day be filled with your peace and heavenly blessing. Be gracious to us and cause your Holy Spirit to dwell more richly among us.

Father of Mercy, continue your loving kindness toward us. Make us worthy to walk in the way of your Son, loyal to your teaching and unwavering in love and service. Keep far from us all anxiety, darkness, and gloom, and grant that peace, light, and joy ever abide among us.

Group: For in you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

The Leader pours a cup of wine, raises the cup, and continues as follows.

Leader: Behold, God is my salvation.

Group: I will trust and will not be afraid.

Leader: For God the Lord is my strength and song.

Group: And he has become my salvation.

Leader: Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

Group: Your blessing be upon your people.

Leader: The Lord of Hosts is with us.

Group: The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Leader: God's people had light and joy and gladness and honor.

Group: So be it with us.

Leader: I will lift the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who have created the fruit of the vine.

Group: Amen.

As the cup is being passed, the following blessing is recited over some bread if the ceremony is being conducted within the context of a meal.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bring forth bread from the earth.

Group: Amen.

Distribute the bread and begin the meal.

Closing Ceremony (for Sunday Evening)

Blessing before the Meal

The Lord's Day candle should be lit at the beginning of the ceremony.

Begin with a song and perhaps a time of praise.

The following bracketed prayer, adapted from the blessing of Zechariah from Luke 1, may be included at this point, or the Leader may decide to move directly to the next prayer.

Leader: [Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. For the day has dawned upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.]

Light the candle and recite the following blessing.

Assistant: Blessed are you, Lord our God, who created light on the first day and raised your Son, the Light of the World, to begin the new creation.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who give us joy as we kindle the light for the Lord's Day.

Group: Amen

For a short form of the ceremony, the following set of exhortations and responses may be omitted.

Leader: Let us trust in the Lord and in his saving help.

Group: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Leader: Let us receive his life and rejoice in his presence.

Group: He is the true Light that enlightens every man.

Leader: Let us keep his commandments and walk in his ways.

Group: His Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Leader: Let us proclaim his goodness and show forth his glory.

Group: We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

The Opening Proclamation

The following blessing is a proclamation to introduce the meal and normally would be said entirely by the Leader but can also be read responsively, as indicated.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, this is the Lord's Day.

(G:) Let us welcome it in joy and peace.

(L:) Today we set aside the concerns of the week that we may honor the Lord and celebrate his resurrection. Today we cease from our work in order to worship God and remember the eternal life to which he has called us.

(G:) The Lord himself is with us, to refresh and strengthen us.

(L:) Let us welcome God among us and give him glory.

(G:) Let us love one another in Christ.

(L:) May the Holy Spirit be with us, to deepen our devotion to the Lord and to increase our zeal for the way of life he has given us.

It is possible to insert here a song and/or a time of praise.

The Blessing of the Wine

Pour wine into the cup, raise it, and recite the following prayer.

Leader: Let us praise God with this symbol of joy and thank him for the blessings of the past week — for health, strength, and wisdom, for our life together in the Sword of the Spirit [*and/or the name of your community, outreach, family*], for the discipline of our trials and temptations, for the happiness that has come to us out of our work.

Leader: Have mercy, Lord our God, upon your people who belong to your Son, the dwelling place of your Spirit. Grant that the Christian people throughout the world may attain the unity for which Jesus prayed on the eve of his sacrifice, and that we in the Sword of the Spirit [*and/or the name of your community, outreach, family*] may be a sign of that unity and a means of its growth. May all your people be renewed in the power of your Spirit so that we might be without spot or blemish and ready for your Son's return. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Ruler and Builder of your people.

Group: Blessed be his name forever.

As the cup is being passed, the Leader recites the following blessing from Numbers 6:24-26.

Leader: May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Group: Amen.

Blessings after the Meal

After the meal another cup of wine is poured and the following blessings are recited with the cup raised.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

Group: Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forever.

Leader: Let us bless our God, of whose bounty we have partaken.

Group: Blessed be our God, of whose bounty we have partaken and through whose goodness we live.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, who feed the whole world with your goodness, with grace, with steadfast love and mercy. Through your great goodness food has never failed us. May it not fail us for ever and ever, for your great name's sake, since you nourish and sustain all beings, and do good to all, and provide food for all your creatures whom you have created. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who give food to all.

Group: Blessed be his name forever.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, for by your great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, for giving us new life in your Son.

Group: Blessed be his name forever.

The following section of the prayer will vary depending on the season. The Leader should pick the appropriate form.

Standard Form

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the great blessings he has bestowed on us in Christ. From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. We who were dead through sin have been brought to life together with Christ and raised up with him and made to sit in heavenly places with him. Lord our God, you have brought us into the rest of Christ.

Group: Now we live with him through the Holy Spirit, and we look for the day when we will dwell with him in your everlasting kingdom.

Advent

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the salvation we receive in Christ. By his coming in the flesh he ransomed us from sin and the power of death, and by his coming again he will renew all things, destroy every evil, and establish the eternal reign of God on earth. Lord our God, you have made us your sons and daughters through Jesus Christ.

Group: Now we live with him through the Holy Spirit and we look for the day when we will dwell with him in your everlasting kingdom.

Christmas Season (between Christmas and Epiphany)

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the great blessings he has bestowed on us in Christ. In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, reconciling earth to heaven, and imparting to us the fullness of life. In him the Word became flesh, enabling men and women of flesh to become children of God. Lord our God, you have revealed to us your glory in Jesus your Son and have made us partakers of the divine nature.

Group: Now we live with him through the Holy Spirit and we look for the day when we will dwell with him in your everlasting kingdom.

The Forty Days of Lent

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the victory over sin that he won for us upon the cross and for this season in which we turn our eyes to him with renewed fervor, hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Lord our God, we have fasted this week that we might seek your face.

Group: And now we eat and drink with joy as we celebrate your salvation.

Easter Season (between Easter and Pentecost)

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the great victory he has won for us in Christ. By his resurrection he has triumphed over sin, conquered death, defeated Satan, and won for us the riches of an eternal inheritance. We who were perishing through sin have been brought to life together with Christ and raised up with him and made to sit in heavenly places with him. Lord our God, you have given us a new birth through the resurrection of Christ.

Group: Now we live with him through the Holy Spirit and we look for the day when we will dwell with him in your everlasting kingdom.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Leader: Let us thank him this day especially for the unity we enjoy in the Body of Christ and for our call to ecumenical life in the Sword of the Spirit. May we all become perfectly one, so that the world may know and believe. Lord our God, you are bringing us into the fullness of unity through the work of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Group: Now we live with him through the Holy Spirit, and we look for the day when we will dwell with him in your everlasting kingdom.

From this point onward, the celebration continues without seasonal variations.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who have created the fruit of the vine.

Group: Amen.

The Setting-Aside of the Day

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, for the true rest you have given us in your Son Jesus and for this day which is a commemoration of his redeeming work. We welcome this day with gladness and consecrate it to the celebration of his resurrection and of the new creation founded in him. Look graciously upon your servants and show us your glory. Blessed are you, Lord our God, who favor your people in the days set aside to your honor.

Group: Amen.

The Leader drinks from the cup and passes it to the others present.

The Blessing of the Bread

The Leader takes bread and recites the following blessing.

Leader: The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food in due season.

Group: You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bring forth bread from the earth.

Group: Amen.

Distribute the bread and begin the meal.